

US\$ 45.9 million for life sciences research announced at British Business Embassy

MINISTERS announced substantial new funding awards to boost the UK life sciences industry, when around 300 UK and international delegates met in London for the British Business Embassy Life Sciences summit during the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The event also focused on how translational research can be used to develop novel therapeutics and medical technologies and examine the expanding role of informatics and digital technology in healthcare delivery.

Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley and Universities and Science Minister, David Willetts announced that the first awards amounting to US\$ 15.9 million from the UK Government's US\$ 285.5 million Biomedical Catalyst have been awarded to 14 UK universities and 18 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

These awards from the Medical Research Council and the Technology Strategy Board will support UK academics and businesses on the first vital step in exploring the market potential of their early-stage scientific ideas.

"The UK has one of the world's largest and most productive life science sectors. We have cutting edge industries such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, healthcare and medical technologies. We attract almost 10 per cent of the world's phar-



GSK expanded its Sri Lankan operation through its investment in a US\$ 11.2 million Panadol manufacturing plant, opened in April this year. Health Minister Maithripala Sirisena officially declares open the facility as Economic Development Minister Basil Rajapaksa, Postal Services Minister Jeevan Kumaranatunga, British High Commissioner John Rankin and GSK Managing Director T.S. Dayananda look on

maceutical R&D funding," said Minister David Willetts.

He also announced that the Medical Research Council and a consortium of 10 UK Government and charity research funders have invested US\$ 30 million to establish four e-health research centres which will enable the UK to make more effective use of electronic health data – a field with huge possibilities for health care delivery and the understanding of disease.

The UK's research is the most productive and efficient in the G8. It produces more publications and citations per researcher

and per pound of public funding than any of its major competitors. UK scientists are some of the best in the world, winning 76 Nobel prizes for their scientific achievements.

In early August, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the Olympic drug-testing laboratories, located in Harlow, will be converted into a US\$15.9 million world-class research centre.

The MRC-NIHR Phenome Centre, the first of its kind in the world, will use cutting edge facilities developed for London 2012 to enable researchers to explore the

FT Quote

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characteristics of disease in order to develop new drugs and treatments for patients with a wide range of common diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and dementia.

The UK's medical technology, biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors generate US\$ 23.7 billion, US\$ 5.4 billion and US\$ 50.4 billion of annual turnover respectively. Together, they employ some 164,800 individuals; additionally, around 52,000 individuals are employed by 37 global pharmaceutical companies who have operations in the UK.

Having a long history in the country and a strong success story for the UK's involvement in Sri Lanka's healthcare sector is GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) – the British multinational pharmaceutical, biologics, vac-

cines and consumer healthcare company. GSK has been entrenched in Sri Lanka's health-care industry for over 50 years, having set up one of the country's first pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in the late 1950s.

The pharmaceutical-retail market in Sri Lanka is valued at over US\$ 76 million and GSK holds a share of around 7.5%. GSK continues to sustain its position in this market despite stiff competition from branded generics as well as pure generics. GSK also leads the field in vaccines and is the most trusted marketer of vaccines for children and adults in the country.

It is interesting to note that one fourth of all vaccines used in the world are from GSK and 80% of this is in the developing world. They also market other products, many of which are among market leaders, making it one of the largest pharmaceutical entities in Sri Lanka. The company further expanded its Sri Lankan operation through its investment in a US\$ 11.2 million Panadol manufacturing plant, opened in April this year.

Furthermore, GSK continues to make significant contributions to the ongoing medical education of healthcare professionals in Sri Lanka as a part of its commitment to develop and improve the quality of local medical care.

GSK has organised many medical education symposia for Sri Lankan doctors and has also made investments to share international knowledge among the local medical community. GSK has also undertaken a

series of chemist-education meetings, held annually in all major towns in Sri Lanka, with the hope of improving the standards of medical care concerning the dispensing of drugs through chemists.

FT Quick Take

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The Katchatheevu Sovereignty Commission

Guest Column



By Srinath Fernando

IT is with great sacrifices that Sri Lanka brought about a victory against ruthless terrorism, which is certainly a feather in the cap of Rajapaksa family. No one can dispute the fact that President Rajapaksa provided the political leadership and ensured that the LTTE was decimated at any cost.

The Tamil diaspora and the pro-separatist war on the political front are making their presence felt all over the world. This is a situation that must be confronted by every patriotic citizen because this is not a question that is directed at the Rajapaksas only and it will not disappear even if another government comes to power. It is highly unlikely that the pro-separatist lobby would remain passive under such circumstances.

Sri Lanka too must intensify its war to win hearts and minds, especially in Tamil Nadu (TN). This is entirely a new ball game and must be met with the soft power at the disposal of the Government. A central coordinating authority within the Ministry of External Affairs must take the lead with experts directing policy on psychological warfare, strategic communications and public diplomacy.

Propaganda, blatant lies and media war

One news report quoted Prof. Rohan Gunaratne as saying: "These are all indications that the media war has been lost. The Government has won the war in the battlefield, but lost it at the table."

It was a pity that the Central Government allowed Karunanidhi to go ahead with the conference organised by the Tamil Eelam Supporters Organisation (TESO). The centre should have been very firm over this issue as the LTTE is a banned organisation in India and this would provide political incentives to other terrorist movements in India. There are thousands of front organisations working towards mischievous criminal goals within India. The actions of the Central Government cannot be viewed as being prudent in allowing such a conference to take place.

It was the Union Minister P. Chidambaram who rushed to Chennai and cautioned and urged Karunanidhi over

taking up the Eelam cause and requested word "Eelam" be dropped from the agenda. TESO website also refers to "horrors of genocide" against Tamil people. This is the main propaganda slogan against Sri Lanka.

The genocide refers to "deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic group," but there are zero such phenomena in Sri Lanka. The whole world must be educated that there is no such genocide being perpetrated against the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. This is a blatant lie that must be laid bare once and for all.

Adverse propaganda against Sri Lanka is being unleashed at an alarming rate and counter propaganda by the Government seems to be lacking in direction. The political situation towards Sri Lanka is rapidly changing in TN and Sri Lanka should intensify its war against the separatist lobby in TN and all over the world. This is purely a hearts and minds war.

The TN Government has been vociferous in its statements against Sri Lanka and

has made statements that VIPs from Sri Lanka should have prior notice before arriving in TN and the Chief Minister had long been urging the Central Government to take steps that are detrimental to Indo-Lanka relations. This is an alarming development and must be met with a counter move to neutralise the TN Government's efforts.

We are fortunate that the Congress (I) Government is in power. What would be the situation if a pro-Tamil government comes to power in Delhi? The Tamils in Sri Lanka have a different ideology vis-à-vis Tamil reconciliation issue but Tamil politicians in TN are promoting an altogether different political agenda.

If the TN Government is so interested in the rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka, they must be more vigilant in controlling TN fishermen encroaching Sri Lankan waters, thus depriving the economic stocks of fish belong to Tamil fishermen from northern Sri Lanka. They had been deprived of fishing stock for three decades owing to naval operations.

Sovereignty of the Katchatheevu Island

There will be more headaches for the Government as there is a real possibility of the conflict being dragged out over the possession of the Island of Katchatheevu. This writer urges setting up Katchatheevu Sovereignty Commission (KSC) to protect its sovereignty, economy, natural habitat, natural resources (hydrocarbons if there are any), environment, historical structures, and religious significance of the



Island (St. Antony's Feast celebrated by both Indians and Sri Lankans) through a legislative framework that must be introduced as an urgent bill. It would provide an added claim to it.

Since the agreement was signed in 1974, there has not been any meaningful effort to develop the island or consolidate our claim to it. The political vulnerability of the issue is still open as there are interested parties trying make political capital of this issue.

The Hindu newspaper report in June 2011 that "a resolution, moved by the Chief Minister, cited the Supreme Court's ruling in 1960 in the Berubari case that any agreement on the cession of Indian territory to another country should be ratified by Parliament through an amendment of the Constitution. However, contrary to the verdict of the Supreme Court, Katchatheevu was ceded, under the 1974 and 1976 agreements, to Sri Lanka without the approval of two Houses of Parliament. Referring to Jayalalitha filing the petition on the issue, the motion urged the Revenue Department to implead itself in the case, as a measure

of strengthening the case. Winding up the debate, the Chief Minister traced the genesis of the Katchatheevu issue. She recalling the steps taken by her since 1991 said on several occasions, she had urged the Union Government and Prime Ministers, directly and through letters, to get back Katchatheevu. In September 2004, she personally presented a memorandum to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, calling upon the Centre to retrieve the island through 'lease in perpetuity' and restore the rights of fishermen."

The efforts of the anti-Sri Lanka groups would continue over this issue given the recent fishing disputes and it would be prudent for the Government of Sri Lanka to enact legislation ideally titled KSC, as the Government has the numbers to push through urgent legislation at will.

The Government of Sri Lanka and India must always be vigilant that organised groups may make an unofficial entry into the island and hoist Indian/TN flag, etc. as a tactic to whip up nationalistic sentiments. It is the responsibility of the Indian Navy to

thwart such efforts from the Indian side and Sri Lanka Navy from the Sri Lankan side. This would be a potential point of clash and public opinion could be manipulated in this regard.

The Government must increase the level of staff at Sri Lanka Deputy High Commission at Chennai and diplomats over there must keep an ear to the ground all times. Latest indications are that Jayalalitha has vowed to move the Supreme Court again. The political fallout of this would be tremendous for both Jayalalitha and Sri Lanka.

What would be the political ramifications if the Supreme Court of India upholds her petition? Would the matter be referred to International Court of Justice (ICJ)? If it does happen, it would decide the case based on historical facts not on the goodwill between India and Sri Lanka.

Would it be prudent if a Special Cabinet Committee be appointed to look into the matter on the constitutional position of the case in question in India and the legal position if the matter goes to ICJ? Could KSC (if enacted by Parliament of Sri Lanka) make submissions to Supreme Court of India through Indian Constitutional law experts at the direction of the Government of Sri Lanka/KSC?

Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)

The media reported that the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam had secured the support of former Attorney General of US Ramsey Clark. We must look into the causes and circumstances that drive these individuals to support such outfits.

TGTE's mission statement says that one of its missions is to "establish direct links with foreign governments and other international organisations". Sri Lanka too must pursue a policy of engaging foreign governments, legislators, diplomats and other international institutions where pro-separatist lobby is making inroads and show them and the whole world that there is no such genocide in Sri Lanka and Tamils of Sri Lanka live peacefully with the majority Sinhalese.

The Government too should invite foreign dignitaries and media personnel to visit Sri Lanka and to have a real ground assessment so that propaganda churned out by pro-separatist lobby could be debunked.

It is however necessary to vigorously pursue the Government's reconciliation effort, the absence of which provides ample opportunities for the separatist lobby to create a wrong picture in Sri Lanka. There must be a political process that could be marketed to the international community. The longer the absence of such reconciliation process, the harder it would be for the Government to deal with mounting pressure worldwide.

(The writer is a freelance journalist and a political lobbying and government affairs consultant.)